1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

a. The cultural area

THE Nyakyusa and Ngonde[1] are a Bantu-speaking people who live at the north-west corner of Lake Nyasa, on the marshy plain at the head of the Lake, and in the hills that rise steeply to the north and west of it. They straddle the Songwe river which divides Tanganyika from Nyasaland. The area is enclosed by the Lake itself, the escarpment of the Livingstone mountains on the north-east and the Poroto mountains on the north-west. To the west the boundaries are less clearly defined, but coincide pretty closely with the boundary of Rungwe district and with the watershed which separates Nyasaland from Northern Rhodesia. To the south the boundary is that of Chief Mwafulira's country, which lies some twenty miles south of Karonga (see Map I). Most of the area is thus situated between 9° and 10° S., and 33° and 34° E. It covers approximately 4,500 square miles and the population is about 235,000.[2]

Within this area there are local differences in language and custom. The dominant groups are the *Nyakyusa*, who live in Tanganyika on the Lake-shore plain and up into the hills as far as Rungwe mission, and the people of *Ngonde* who live on the Lake-shore plain in Nyasaland. These two groups speak dialects which, though differing somewhat in vocabulary and pronunciation, are easily understood by speakers from both, and their social structure is essentially similar. The main difference is that in Ngonde a

[1] The old men say *Nkhonde*, and the name appears in most of the literature as *Konde*.

[2] The area of Tukuyu district is 1,866 square miles, and the area subject to the Kyungu, the paramount chief of Ngonde, is 2,687 square miles. The Tanganyika census of 1931 gives the population of Rungwe district as 195,062: this was believed in the district to be an over-estimate. The population of Ngonde is approximately 40,000. For the southern boundary of the Ngonde people in 1881 see James Stewart, 'Lake Nyassa and the Water Route to the Lake Region of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, New Series*, Vol. III, 1881. He states that nine miles north of Mount Waller is a marsh; south of it are the Tumbuka, north of it the 'Chungu' (i.e. Ngonde).

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centralized chieftainship[1] developed with the development of the ivory trade, whereas among the Nyakyusa (who were geographically much more isolated) nearly a hundred small chiefdoms maintained their independence until the European conquest. In their economy, their kinship system, their age-village organization and their rituals, however, the people of Ngonde are very similar to the Nyakyusa.

The Nyakyusa themselves may be sub-divided into those living on the Lake-shore plain (*MuNgonde*), those around *Masoko*, those to the east under the Livingstone mountains in *Selya* and *Saku*, and those to the north, viz. the *Kukwe* and *Lugulu*. The last two groups differ appreciably in dialect and custom from the others, but all speak dialects which are mutually intelligible.[2]

There are also a number of small groups with old langugages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde, are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. These include the *Penja* on the plateau to the west of the Kukwe; a small group of *Nyika* on the same plateau; the *Ndali* in the hills to the north of the Songwe; the *Sukwa* to the south of them; the *Lambya* and *Wenya* further west; small groups of *Henga* and *Mambwe* on the western border of Ngonde, and the *Kisi*, a people famous as potters and fishermen, who live on the north-east shore of the Lake. Most of these people are now, we are told, being rapidly assimilated to the Nyakyusa and Ngonde in speech and in law, but we have little

[1] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, 1939.

[2] The term *Nyakyusa* means primarily the people of the Lake plain in Tanganyika, and those around Masoko, but it is now used by extension to include those in Selya and Saku, together with the Kukwe. We use 'Nyakyusa proper', for those on the Lake plain and around Masoko. The terms *Ngonde* and *Mwamba* are a source of some confusion because their meaning varies with the location of the speaker, and the meaning of Ngonde also varies with the prefex used. The primary meaning of *Aba-Ngonde* is 'the people of the plains' but anyone travelling in the direction of the sacred hill Mbande, on which the Kyungu (the paramount chief of Ngonde) lived is spoken of as going *KuNgonde*, whether he start from nearby, or from as far away as Tukuyu (cf. Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., p. 7). *MuNgonde* is generally used by the Nyakyusa for the Lake-shore plain of Tanganyika. In this book we use *Ngonde* for the area of the Kyungu's supremacy, and avoid *MuNgonde*. *AbaMwamba* means by derivation 'the hill people', but is generally used for 'the people to the north'. The Ngonde of Karonga call those on the plain around Mwaya *BaMwamba*, the men of Mwaya apply the name not to themselves, but to the people of Selya, while the people of Selya apply it to those in the hills to the north of them. We therefore avoid the term.

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first-hand knowledge of them. On the coast they are classed with Nyakyusa and Ngonde as *Sokile*, a nickname derived from the traditional Nyakyusa greeting.

This book is concerned with the Nyakyusa.[1] What it contains is true in general terms for the people of Ngonde, but how far it is applicable to the smaller groups cited we are not certain. The Ndali, Sukwa, and Penja, are said to have long had an age-village organization; and Henga, Nyika and Kisi living intermingled with Ngonde and Nyakyusa have adopted it; but of the customs of the Wenya and Lambya we know little. Dr. Kerr Cross and Monteith Fotheringham, who travelled extensively in the area before 1890, reported that the Ndali and Sukwa (of Misuku) were very similar to the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people, but that the Lambya were different, practising shifting *citemene* cultivation, and living in stockaded villages.[2]

According to their own traditions the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs (who trace descent from common ancestors) came ten generations ago from Kinga country, on the Livingstone mountains, and found the Rungwe and North Nyasa country already occupied. They established themselves as chiefs and have since been increasing the area of their occupation. The Kinga also affirm that their chiefs are related to those of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde, and they join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to common ancestors at Lubaga and LiKyala (see Map III), but the Kinga culture is quite distinct from that of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde; we stayed long enough in Kinga country to convince ourselves that the Kinga live in kinship villages and not in age-villages, and that they differ from the Nyakyusa in many other respects.

There seems little doubt that the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people have been expanding in an area not uninhabited, but sparsely inhabited, and that the assimilation of the Penja and other groups now proceeding is no new phenomenon, but part of a process which has long been going on. Within recent years over 2,000

[1] The Nyakyusa as here defined numbered 159,044 in Rungwe district at the 1931 census, and 3,732 outside the district; the Ndali 22,834, the Lambya (within Rungwe district, and not including those in Nyasaland) 12,403, and the Kisi (in Njombe district) 2,115. *Tanganyika Territory, Census of the Native Population*, 1931.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika, *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. VI (1890), p. 286; L. M. Fotheringham, *Adventures in Nyassaland* (1891), pp. 129–33. Nyondo was a Lambya chief, cf. Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., p. 10.

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Nyakyusa families have crossed the Poroto mountains and settled in Safwa and Nyika country. They have moved, primarily, to secure good pasture, fertile garden land, and accessible markets; and the accounts of Nyakyusa history which we have suggest that the first two of these motives have long been in operation. There is no sign of these Nyakyusa immigrants being absorbed by the previous occupants of the country. Indeed, were it not for the intervention of the Administration, it seems that the Nyakyusa immigrants might soon dominate the less organized Safwa and Nyika. As it is, certain of the Safwa and Nyika Native Authority Courts are conducting proceedings in Nyakyusa as well as in their own languages,[1] a fact which supports the Nyakyusa boast that all their neighbours are learning their language. Many Kinga, Mahasi, Wanji, and Poroto are said to learn to speak Nyakyusa, though there are few Nyakyusa settlers among them, since they find the language useful in external contacts.[2] The Kinga tell a myth of how they, together with the Nyakyusa proper, the Kukwe, the Ndali, the Ngonde, the Mahasi, the Kisi, the Pangwa, and the Bena came from a place Ilongo (in the present Bena country) which they call 'the dark house' (*nyumba nditu*), and the Penja speak of a centre of dispersion, Kina, to the north of Rungwe mountain, from which they and the Safwa and Poroto came. The people of Ngonde, for their part, trace connections with the Inamwanga and Iwa, saying that their chiefs in their journeyings left sons to rule these people; they also assert that one of their predecessors on the Lake-shore plain was a hunter from Fipa country.[3]

Despite these tenuous links with their eastern, northern, and north-western neighbours, the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people are, as we have said, culturally quite distinct from them. The Nyakyusa themselves are emphatic that their culture differs from the cultures of the Kinga, the Safwa, the Poroto, and the Nyika—a statement which our own observation, and the evidence of other writers, confirm.[4] And the Ngonde differ in many respects both

[1] R. de Z. Hall, 'Local Migration in Tanganyika', *African Studies*, 4 (1945). 2,100 families had moved before 1938; 3,000 by 1941.

[2] This is despite the fact that Swahili is the official vernacular for Tanganyika, being the medium of instruction in Government primary schools, and the language used by the Administration.

[3] Godfrey Wilson, op. cit., p. 10.

[4] E. Kootz-Kretschmer, *Die Safwa* (1926); J. Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back* (1881), Vol. I, pp. 46–52; R. de Z. Hall, op. cit.; D. Kerr-Cross, op. cit.

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Nyakyusa

from the Inamwanga and Iwa to the north-west and the Henga to the south. The affinities of the Inamwanga and Iwa appear to be with the Mambwe,[1] while the Henga are an offshoot of the Tumbuka-Kamanga people who took refuge from the Ngoni in Ngonde.[2] Of the Phoka who live high up in the hills south-west of Ngonde we know almost nothing, except that they are skilled cultivators, and their language is closely related to Tumbuka.

The cultural group consisting of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde people, together with small groups in Rungwe district and Ngonde largely absorbed by them, and including the Nyakyusa immigrants in Mbeya district, probably numbers about a quarter of a million.

Of the more distant cultural affinities of this group we know nothing: there are no consistent similarities in culture between it and any other known group. The elaborate age-organization, and the great ceremony of handing over secular power to the next generation, which is held every thirty years or so, suggest East African connections, while the girls' puberty and marriage ceremony (*ubusungu*) is in many ways similar to the *cisungu* ceremony of the Bemba;[3] and the witchcraft beliefs are like those of the Azande[4] and the Lovale.[5]

b. Environment and economy

The Nyakyusa-Ngonde country is fertile, well watered and, to European eyes, spectacularly beautiful, with its arc of high mountains and sparkling lakes. The Nyakyusa valley forms part of the

[1] F. F. R. Boileau and L. A. Wallace, 'The Nyasa-Tanganyika Plateau', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XIII (1899); J. C. C. Coxhead, 'The Native Tribes of North-Eastern Rhodesia, their Laws and Customs', *Royal Anthropological Institute, Occasional Paper*, No. 5, 1914; C. Goldsbury and H. Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia* (1911).

[2] F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), Vol. I, p. 52; M. Sanderson, 'Some Marriage Customs of the WaHenga, Nyasaland', *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. XXII (1922–3); T. Cullen Young, 'The WaHenga of North Nyasaland', *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. XXIII (1923–4); 'Tribal Intermixture in Northern Nyasaland', *J.R.A.I.*, Vol. LXIII (1933); 'Habits and Customs of the Olden Days among the Tumbuka-Kamanga People', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. X (1936).

[3] A. I. Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 4. (1940).

[4] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937).

[5] C. M. N. White, 'Witchcraft, Divination and Magic among the Balovale Tribes', *Africa*, Vol. XVIII (1948), pp. 81–104.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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The fine dot stipple indicates the aj

[facing p. v (a)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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MAP I. THE CULTURAL AREA

the approximate area occupied by the Nyakyusa-Ngonde people and groups

[facing p. v (b)]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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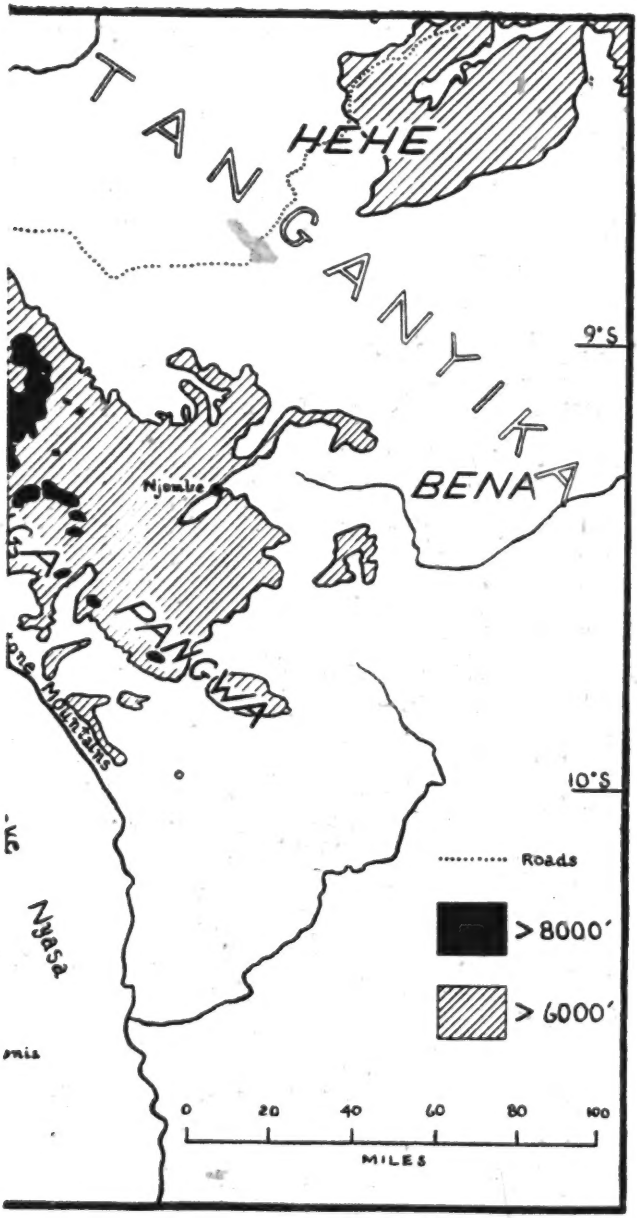

Drawn by J. V. L. Rennie

dominated by them.

[FACING p. v (c)]

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

Bukukwe, culminating, so far as the peopled regions are concerned, in Tukuyu, five thousand feet above sea-level, the residence of the Administrative Officer and his staff, with Post and Telegraph Offices, and a large Government Hospital. Here also are many small trading stores, conducted by Indians and Somali; and a little to the south is the Kyimbila Station of the Scottish Churches Mission, carrying on the work of the exiled German missionaries. Still further to the south, and less elevated, is the British military post of Masoko.

The population of these fertile and healthy highlands is dense. From Tukuyu or Kyimbila, looking south and west, numerous villages, each hidden in its banana grove, fill the view westwards to the Bundali Hills, where the Kibira River is marked out by a morning mist, and southwards towards the lake, thirty miles distant. In this region the people call themselves Nyakyusa, with a number of local names indicating no difference of origin or language. The soil is so fertile, and the rain usually so abundant, that in many places two crops are taken annually of some foodstuffs, while of the others the single crop is so great that scarcity, no uncommon occurrence in some parts of Central Africa, is rarely experienced.

The Bundali Hills close in this happy valley (for in spite of its elevation the country has the appearance of a valley) on the west; and beyond them, after a most exhausting march, over lofty summits, through deep ravines threaded by bridgeless rivers, one comes to the home of the Bandali, a race of hardy

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

highlanders closely related to the Konde. Here, at Isoko, is another station of the Scottish Churches Mission.

Eastwards of the Tukuyu uplands lie the Kinga Mountains, better known as the Livingstone Range, near the foot of which lies the Itete Station of the Scottish Churches Mission. From here one gets a view of lake and mountain, river and plain, which may well be regarded as one of the finest of the kind in Africa. The evening sun, shining upon the great mountain mass, reveals hundreds of crevices and folds in which lie tiny houses, beside waterfalls or rapidly dashing streams; while up to the summits stretch the wheat-fields, green or golden yellow in the evening light. At one's feet sleep the countless villages, banana hidden; and away in the distance Lake Nyasa reflects the last gleams of departing day.

Over the mountains lies the country of the Kinga people, a land indescribably rough and mountainous, but here and there well watered, with fertile valleys producing wheat, oats, peas, in abundance, besides the usual African products. Here the cold is so great that during part of the year many of the people sleep in pits hollowed out of the ground, and heated by fires which are extinguished at bed-time.

Northwards the upland valley is bounded by the Igale Hills, from the top of which one looks to the lofty Mbeye Mountain, which from one point of view presents an astonishing likeness to Arthur's Seat and the Salisbury Crags at Edinburgh. Beyond Igale live the Sango and the Safwa, the former a vigorous

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

and warlike tribe, the latter until recently their oppressed subjects and slaves.

The earliest traditions go back to a time when the Konde dwelt in Malongo, in the area now known as Mahenge. There their god Ngeketo, roused to wrath by three attempts to destroy him, abandoned them, and is now the God of the white men. Whether on this account, or for some other reason, a great migration brought them to the country north of the Songwe River, where they settled down, no doubt conquering older inhabitants. At some unknown time, but before the Angoni reached so far north in their great march from Zululand, the Sango, neighbours of the Konde northwards, were driven out of their homes by intertribal warfare. They broke down over the intervening mountains, and overcame the unwarlike Konde, among whom they settled down as chiefs, retaining until now the tradition of their Sango ancestry. Whether at the same or another time, the Kinga, probably for the same reason—pressure from behind—swarmed down the steep mountain passes, and established themselves in the Nserya region.

One of the leading Kinga chiefs was Mwangonde, who, under the name of Chungu, occupied land at Kabari, near the Mwakeleli Mission Station. His son, Kyabara Chungu, setting out with an armed force in search of more fertile garden land, met with varying fortunes, until he was finally obliged to cross the Songwe into what later became Nyasaland. In this region Chungu seems to have made easy con-

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

IV. NORTH NYASA REGION

NGONDE, NYAKYUSA, KINGA

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

●101

NOMENCLATURE

The whole group of Nyakyusa and related peoples were formerly called *Monde*.[1] The *Ngonde* people are sometimes spelt *Nkonde*, and once at least have been referred to as the '*Chungu*'[2] presumably meaning the people of Chungu (the title of their paramount chief). The *Nyakyusa* are sometimes spelt *Niakiusa* and sometimes referred to by the names of some of their branches, e.g. *Seria* (also spelt *Selya*, *Salya*) or *Mwamba*. They are also called *Sokile* (or *Sochile*). Some other members constituting this group have names with variant spellings which will be indicated below.

GROUPING

The Ngonde and Nyakyusa are immigrants from the east into the area they now inhabit. By tradition they are offshoots of the same stock as the *Kinga* in the Livingstone mountains. From this stock the *Iwa* (or *Iba*) and the *Nyamwanga* (*Miamwanga* or *Niamwanga*) chiefs are also said to derive. The Kinga are thought to be related to the *Wanji* of the north and to the *Pangwa* in the Pangwa mountains. The *Matengo*, south of the Ruhuhu river, are probably related to the Pangwa.

(*a*) *Kinga* inhabit the Livingstone mountains on the eastern shores of Lake Nyasa in Njombe district, Tanganyika.

(*b*) *Nyakyusa* are in Tanganyika in Rungwe district, with a recent immigrant section in Mbeya district. They inhabit the northern shores of Lake Nyasa, the western as far as the Songwe river, and the eastern as far as the Livingstone mountains. The *Mwamba* (also called *Lungulu*) in Rungwe district are a branch of the Nyakyusa. The name Nyakyusa covers three sections: *Nyakyusa* proper, *Kukwe*, and *Selya*.[3]

(*c*) *Ngonde* are in Nyasaland, in the plain on the west lake shore, between the lower reaches of the north Rukuru river and the Songwe.

(*d*) *Nyamwanga* and *Iwa* live in Abercorn and Kasama districts, Northern Rhodesia. The Nyamwanga in the hills at the north-eastern sources of the Chambezi river, and spreading into Tanganyika Territory; the Iwa on the watershed between Chambezi and the Luangwa river sources.

In addition to these five tribes, who claim historically to be of one stock, there are numerous small groups, living in semi-isolated conditions in the surrounding mountains east and west of the north end of Lake Nyasa. These areas have never been surveyed. It is not certain when the Ngonde came into their present country,[4] but they came as immigrants into already inhabited land; according to Wilson, their neighbours, the

[1] Kerr-Cross, 1894. [2] Stewart, 1881.

[3] Wilson, 3, 1938, p. 13.

[4] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 11, makes no attempt to date their first arrival; Murray, 1932, p. 208, says that they appear to have inhabited the country as far back as can be traced with any degree of historical accuracy.

[p. 71]

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

Sukwa, *Wenya*, *Lambya*, are politically subordinate, but culturally distinct.[1] They are probably remnants of the original inhabitants of the country. But Wilson also mentions elsewhere that the *Ndali* and *Lambya* of the upper Songwe river are two cultural groups closely related to the Nyakyusa.[2] We know that many of the small independent neighbours of the Ngonde are related to each other (*Tambo*, *Wandya*, and *Fungwe*),[3] their political independence being mainly due to the mountainous nature of their country.[4] Many of their names, which we take to represent distinct tribes, are merely locality names,[5] and some of the names which appear on the Tribal Map of East Africa represent only very small groups of people: for example, the *Tambo*, between the Iwa and the Luangwa river, were estimated in 1911 to be only 500 altogether.[6] These peoples are most probably remnants of the original Tumbuka[7] cluster, and through them belong to the Nyanja–Cewa group; some of them may possibly have been forerunners of the *Bisa–Senga* immigration from the Congo, or they may have affiliations with the tribes of Tanganyika, *Fipa* or *Safwa*. It is unprofitable, on the existing information, to speculate on their original ethnic grouping, and impossible, without a survey in the country itself, to discover their present cultural affinities. At present their geographical position is the only reason for grouping them together in the Ngonde cluster. The *Henga* to the south of the Ngonde are an exception. Their arrival in the country is a matter of historical knowledge,[8] and they certainly belong, not to the Ngonde, but to the Tumbuka cluster.

Similar difficulties are found on the east side of Lake Nyasa. The *Wanji* and *Poroto* north of the Kinga, the *Pangwa* and *Matengo* on the south, and small tribes on the lake coast, the *Kisi*, *Sandia*, *Mpoto*, &c., appear as names on the maps, but little else is known of them.

Dr. Meinhard considers that the Nyamwanga and Iwa on the west, and the Kinga and Pangwa on the east, are culturally too dissimilar to be counted in the same group with the Ngonde and Nyakyusa.[9] However, information about these peoples is so scanty that it has been necessary in any case to base this report on the Ngonde and Nyakyusa, which have been studied by Godfrey Wilson.

History

As far as available information is concerned, only the history of the Ngonde has been recorded, and it would also seem as if this is the only one of the related groups which has developed a centralized political system, except the Nyamwanga and Iwa. The Nyakyusa, as they spread westwards, were ruled by a number of petty chiefs, each of whom was succeeded by two or more sons, who carved out separate chiefdoms in the area into which they were expanding. There was no paramount political authority, but a number of tiny chiefdoms, none of which to-day exceeds 3,000 adult males, and most of which are far smaller than that. To-day about 100 traditionally

[1] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 7.

[2] On the other hand, the *Mbeya District Notebook* records that the Lambya are related to the Nyakyusa, and the Nyika have affinities with the Lambya, but the Ndali are of a different origin.

[3] Coxhead, 1914, pp. 3 and 58.

[4] Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p. 12.

[5] Nyirende, 1931 (footnote by Young, T. C.).

[6] Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p. 12.

[7] See Young, T. C., 1, 1932, p. 60: 'Far back in the hills . . . there exists still a Nyika people whose speech has been much less interfered with by the incomers, and which apart from dissimilarity in tone and accent, is not far removed from Tumbuka-Kamanga speech.'

[8] Lugard, 1893, vol. i, p. 51.

[9] Professor M. Wilson corroborates this.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

THE CONSTITUTION OF NGONDE.

1. *A COMPARATIVE PROBLEM.*

Ngonde is a district at the north end of Lake Nyasa; its centre is fixed, its boundaries vague. The centre of Ngonde is the sacred hill Mbande which stands in a bend of the Lukulu River eight miles from the lake. Here is the traditional home of the Kyungus, the paramount chiefs of Ngonde.[1] But its boundaries cannot be so easily defined. A man moving from any direction and almost any distance towards Mbande will say he is going "to Ngonde." One man may start five miles from Mbande and proceed to its base, another may, in the north at least, start far away among the Nyakyusa in Tanganyika and stop fifteen miles short of the Songwe, where alone the Kyungu's supremacy begins to be effective, and yet both alike say they are going "to Ngonde." But in this paper the name Ngonde is used to refer to the area of the Kyungu's present political paramountcy alone, an area defined in the north by the Songwe River, which is also the boundary between Nyasaland and Tanganyika, in the east by Lake Nyasa, in the west by the Nyasaland—Northern Rhodesia boundary and in the south by the borders of Chief Mwafulira's country some twenty-five miles from Mbande; an area of 2,687 square miles.

The population of Ngonde, thus defined, is 40,000, with a density of just under fifteen to the square mile; while the rainfall averages 45" per annum. It is thus very different from the country of the Nyakyusa across the Songwe, where the average rainfall is more than twice and the density of population about six times as great.

The people of Ngonde are not homogeneous in language and culture. The dominant group lives on the strip of plain which stretches along the shores of the Lake, north and south from Mbande, and the district is here referred to as "the plain," "the Ngonde plain" or "Ngonde proper." Behind them, in the hills which rise westwards to the borders of Northern Rhodesia, live small groups of Lambya, Sukwa, Wenya, Henga and Mambwe. They, while politically subordinate to the Kyungu, differ considerably from the inhabitants of Ngonde proper in their ways of life and speech. These upland groups we did not visit and, unless the contrary is specifically stated, all references here to the culture or customs of Ngonde should be taken to refer to the plain alone.

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[1] I use the forms Kyungu, Ngonde, Mbande now used by the young men and officially accepted. The old men speak of Chungu, Nkhonde, Mphande.

7: Sanderson 4-5 (ca. 1920) 1923 FN17 Ngonde FN17

THE RELATIONSHIP SYSTEMS OF THE WANGONDE AND WAHENGA TRIBES, NYASALAND.

By MEREDITH SANDERSON, M.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.

I.—THE WANGONDE.

1. THE Wangonde are a Bantu tribe inhabiting that part of Central Africa adjacent to the north-west shores of Lake Nyasa. They are a somewhat primitive people, as yet little contaminated by European civilization; they are intensely conservative and their customs differ from those of neighbouring tribes. As a result of this conservatism their system of relationship still bears, in its nomenclature, evidence of its evolution from exogamy in its most primitive form, and of all Nyasaland tribes the Wangonde have probably been least influenced by contact with others. In recent history they were victimized from time to time both by Arab slavers and by the Angoni, but neither appear to have left any trace of their domination. It should be mentioned, however, that the chieftainship was usurped some 10 (?) generations ago by an adventurer who, according to tradition, came from the north-west (towards Tanganyika) and whose descendants still form the ruling caste. It may be that some new customs were introduced at this time, though this is denied by the descendants of the old nobility, who still retain a large share of influence in tribal council.

2. *Definitions.*—ILUMBU = "brother"[1] to "sister," or "sister" to "brother." A man calls his elder "brother" *mkuluwangu*, a younger one *nung'una*: the same terms are used by a woman for her "sisters." All children of uncles and aunts are regarded as "brothers" and "sisters," including those of maternal uncle and of paternal aunt; those of father's elder "brother," of mother's elder "sister," and of mother's "brother," are called *wakulu*, irrespective of age.

The term *wamyitu* is often used, irrespective of sex, as alternative for "brother" or "sister"; its real meaning is rather "kinsman," and it may also be used for any relative or connection except the age-classes immediately above or below that of the speaker (*e.g.*, father or son), as it implies a degree of intimacy not permitted with those degrees. *Wamyitu* means "my" (lit. "our") "kinsman"; the second and third persons are *wamyinu* and *wamyao* respectively: there is no singular form.

[1] The use of inverted commas with English terms of relationship indicates that they are used in the full classificatory sense.

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

as they do, in their behaviour and their mutual relationships to a common type. Space forbids such an undertaking here; and it is necessary to emphasize that, although the most significant facts are described in an orderly manner, and although certain reasons for these facts are indicated in their specific character and in their connections with one another, yet these reasons are not fully or systematically worked out, and the result is a description which leaves the facts only half-explained. And, in so far as this society is not here fully analyzed, so it is not yet fully comparable with others. The reader of this paper will detect many points of similarity and of difference between Nyakyusa society and some other with which he is familiar, but the comparison cannot be made to yield any propositions about the nature of human societies in general until the facts of both have been fully explained in terms of their particular social, cultural, and external conditions.

Climate, Cultural Groups, and European Contact.

The Nyakyusa live in the Rungwe District of South Tanganyika in the Rift Valley at the head of Lake Nyasa. The valley is dominated and closed at its North end by the recently extinct Rungwe volcano, from whose foot the land, starting as an upland plateau 5,000 ft. above sea-level, tumbles southwards for twenty-five miles in a broken cascade of hills, to level out in a plain fifteen or twenty miles from Lake Nyasa. The Lake is 1200 ft. above the sea. The East wall of the Rift rises to 10,000 ft. or more in the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains, but the West wall is two or three thousand feet lower. The climate is very wet, for about 130″ of rain fall each year, and, at 9° South of the Equator, is also very hot. The rain and the sun together make the land extremely fertile; the district is thickly populated (over 100 to the square mile), famine is rare and the Nyakyusa are far better fed than most of their neighbours. Rice was introduced into the plain by Arabs, coffee by the German Missionaries in the hills, and these two crops to-day, under the enthusiastic care and guidance of the Government Agricultural Department, bring to many Nyakyusa a small but steadily increasing cash income.

Their main foods are bananas, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and a variety of greenstuffs, together with meat and curds from their cattle. Millet is extensively grown and is used both for making beer and for eating in the form of porridge.

The name *Nyakyusa* is nowadays used by themselves as a general name for all those who have similar speech and customs and who live in Tanganyika; but formerly it only covered those who live in the South of the district, in the plain and up in the hills as far North as the administra-

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

tive capital, Tukuyu, and it is still thus used to distinguish this group from others. This group will here be referred to as "*Nyakyusa proper.*" Those in the North of the district to the West and East of Mount Rungwe call themselves *Kukwe* and *Mwamba* respectively, and there is a group of chiefdoms to the East, under the Livingstone Mountains, called *Selya*. All these four groups share a common culture, distinguished by minor local peculiarities of dialect and custom. Immediately bordering the Nyakyusa to the South West are the *Ngonde* (Europeanized as "*Konde*") in Northern Nyasaland; they belong to the same cultural group but are distinguished by greater differences of custom and speech than the others. I have not yet visited them.

In the hills to the West of the Rift live the *Ndali*, who are included in this administrative district; and on the plateau under these hills, to the West of the Kukwe, live the *Penja*. Both these small groups have old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. But they are now rapidly being assimilated to the Nyakyusa both in speech and in law.

I use the name Nyakyusa, in accordance with modern usage, to include the Nyakyusa proper, the Kukwe, Mwamba, and Selya groups, but to exclude the Ndali, the Penja, and the Konde. The Nyakyusa together with the Ndali and Penja number 150,000; the Konde of Nyasaland 30,000.[3]

Members of the Berlin and Moravian Missions were the first Europeans to settle in the district, where they have lived now for forty-five years and have made numerous converts. The German Administrators followed them closely, and later came a few planters. But pronounced economic change is a matter of the past five to ten years during which time the Lupa Gold Fields of South Tanganyika have been opened up and have employed increasing numbers of Africans on the diggings. During the past few years the young men of the Nyakyusa have developed the habit of going for a few months, now and again, to the Gold Fields to earn money for tax and clothes. They seldom stay more than six months at a time, often only one or two; so that their absence does not cause the same difficulties in their own community that are found in other areas where the men spend longer periods away from home.

The Family, together with a sketch of wider Kinship Groupings

The relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling are continually visible in the culture of the Nyakyusa. The

[3] Government Census figures.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

KN
102
103
133
487
131
101

Map 1. Country north of Lake Nyasa

[p. viii]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyafyale*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1930). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassaländer* (1908). *Das Deutsche Nyassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Atlas* (1906).

N 101 131 [184] N 642 N 173 N [167] N [563] N 144 N 173 N K 171 [648] [113]

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

In many areas of Eastern Africa the pressure of peasant populations on their tribal lands is a critical feature of the contemporary scene, and this is most especially so in the more fertile parts where the African has accepted the new cash economy and is beginning to appreciate the potentialities of the modern world. The situation has been highlighted recently in the public mind by the publication of the Report of the East African Royal Commission[1] which examined the economic conditions of our time and made general recommendations.

In Tanganyika the overall density of population is low (22 persons per square mile) and the general scale of economic activity still remains little above subsistence level over vast areas of Territory. There are, however, islands of extremely dense populations scattered through the country, often associated with the mountain areas, where soil is fertile, rainfall is reliable and adequate and the cultivation of crops for sale in world markets has gone ahead fairly easily. These populations still comprise peasant farming communities with little capital and their "natural" impulse is to expand their extensive agricultural system rather than to intensify their cultivation on existing holdings. Serious overcrowding soon results for the favourable areas are limited and surrounded by drier bushlands. African attitudes and legal customs concerning their land do not change quickly and they lag behind new conditions of physical limitation and economic development. Whilst the recommendations of the Royal Commission may be valuable in the establishment of general policy, it is obvious that detailed application through time demands a fairly exact knowledge and understanding of particular local conditions if it is to be reasonably successful. This is particularly the case in so large a country as Tanganyika, with its multiplicity of environments and tribal systems of law, land tenure and agriculture, and the social attitudes which encompass them.

The present essay is an attempt, sponsored by Government, to describe and analyse the land and population conditions in one small area of the Territory where a cash economy is emerging and where the pressure of a peasant population on its land resources has become acute. It is hoped that some of this account may be applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other similar areas both in Tanganyika and elsewhere, and that the conclusions reached may be helpful in dealing with the problems there; but primarily this is a study of one particular part of the country in order to provide the information upon which detailed policy may be founded.

The Nyakyusa are not entirely typical of many of the Bantu people of East Africa for they have a most distinctive social organisation, peculiar to themselves, based on age-villages and petty, independent chiefdoms. Also, they inhabit a country whose annual rainfall is unusually high, averaging about 100 inches. On the other hand, these people are one of the very few in Tanganyika for whom we have an excellent account of both their pre-European and early European systems of land tenure. Based on this information, obtained *before* modern changes began, we can perceive, analyse

1. *East African Royal Commission 1953-5, Report:* H.M.S.O. 1955. Cmd. 9475.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and try to understand the nature and reasons for change. Here, then, is a good opportunity for the study of social change – not only in land tenure as such, but also in village and family organisation, political authority and economic life.

II

The Nyakyusa are a Bantu people inhabiting the main part of the Rungwe District in southern Tanganyika, immediately to the north of Lake Nyasa. In 1948 they numbered about 199,000 in that District, but about 10,000 men were probably at the time temporarily absent from their homes and in employment in the mines and towns of the Rhodesias and South Africa (see Gulliver, 1957), whilst about 20,000 had migrated to live in the adjacent Mbeya District to the north.

The tribal area comprises a confined geographical basin surrounding the northern end of Lake Nyasa. It extends only about 40 miles from the tip of the lake at 1,550 feet above sea level to the Poroto Mountains in the north at 8,000 feet; and from east to west is only about 30 miles, from the almost sheer walls of the Livingstone Mountains (with peaks up to 10,000 feet) to the Ndali Highlands (rising to about 7,000 feet). There are therefore unusually large ecological differences within so small an area. Three major regions are to be distinguished: the "Northern Highlands" over about 4,500 feet, the low-lying "Lake Plains" in the south, and the "Central Region" in between. Everywhere rainfall is reliable and high, averaging at least 100 inches annually[1], and this amply compensates for a certain poverty and misuse of the soil, although (and particularly in the Central Region) it brings dangers of soil erosion. Except in the highest parts the banana is the staple food, supported by maize, beans, finger millet and groundnuts. In the Northern Highlands coffee has become well established as the principal cash crop: in the Lake Plains paddy rice cultivation provides both a food and a cash crop: in the Central Region the country is too low generally for coffee and too high and dry for rice; consequently cash-cropping is considerably inferior and the people's standard of living is rather poorer.

The Nyakyusa and their country tended for a long time to be relatively isolated from the outside world by high mountain walls and rain-soaked roads. In addition, or because of it perhaps, they developed an almost unique culture which was supported by considerable conservatism and high insularity. They still continue to regard their African neighbours beyond the mountains as their social and cultural inferiors. The turmoil of the slave-trade in Central Africa passed them by; in modern times they have not enthusiastically accepted Christianity and they have refused to take up the use of Swahili, the Territorial *lingua franca*. In recent years, and most especially since the end of World War II, they have, however, accepted and pushed forward with vigour a rapid and extensive economic development, involving particularly the production of coffee and paddy as cash crops, and large-scale labour migration to the south in the high-wage mining industries. The multiplicity of petty, often tiny, independent chiefdoms has been reorganised to provide four local government areas, each under a Rural Council, in which the old chiefdoms have become something like parishes[2]. Although much of the old conservatism and narrow parochialism persists, yet there is now an atmosphere of accepted change, of a keen desire for economic development, and a general acceptance of a cash economy.

Probably the most significant feature of modern life in the Nyakyusa country is the increasing scarcity of land for agriculture in relation to the

1. At Tukuyu, in the Northern Highlands, annual rainfall averaged 99.28 inches between 1919 and 1952: at Kyela, in the Lake Plains, the average between 1940 and 1951 was 106.21 inches.
2. See Kingdon, Z.E.: The initiation of a system of local government by African rural councils in the Rungwe District, Tanganyika; *The Journal of African Administration*, iii, 4, October, 1951.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

NYAKYUSA OF THE CENTRAL REGION
MWAKIPEGE
MWAMASANGULA
NJOMBE DISTRICT
MWAKILASY
MWAKA-TUNDU
MWANTIPULO
FOREST RESERVE
MWAKYUSA
MWANDEMELE
MWANYILU
KOROSO
MWASULAMA
NYASALAND PROTECTORATE
LAKE NYASA
POPULATION DENSITY IN THE CHIEFDOMS OF THE LAKE PLAINS, RUNGWE DISTRICT
-REFERENCE-
VERY HIGH DENSITY REGION, PROBABLY MUCH OF IT WITH 500 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE. AVERAGE ARABLE HOLDING: 1½-2 ACRES PER ADULT MALE.
HIGH DENSITY REGION, PROBABLY 300-400 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE. AVERAGE ARABLE HOLDING: ABOUT 3 ACRES PER ADULT MALE.
LOW DENSITY REGION, PROBABLY MUCH OF IT WITH ABOUT 100 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE. STILL SOME VACANT LAND AND MUCH UNUSED HILLY LAND.
APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF THE LAKE PLAIN (NTEBELA RURAL COUNCIL AREA)
PRINCIPAL MOTOR ROAD.
VILLAGE IN WHICH SURVEY WAS MADE.
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES

161
102
101
131
361
491

[Facing p. 15]

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Chagga FN4
Haya FN8

House-types of the Banyakyusa

By Agnete Bisgaard

During a stay in the Southern Highlands in Tanganyika in 1955, I was given the opportunity to inspect—and draw plans of—some of the houses belonging to the local Bantu tribe of the Nyakyusa. In literature they are known also under the name of Konde.

The district in which they live is fairly high above sea level and near the borders of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; the rainfall is fully adequate. Banana and coffee are doing well—the banana trees often forming groves in between which you catch a glimpse of the village houses.

The district invites comparison with other localities in Tanganyika where the country is high, and where precipitation is plentiful. Such localities would be the districts around Kilimanjaro and near Bukoba to the west of Lake Victoria. In the former live the Chagga tribe, in the latter the tribe of the Haya. Even here banana and coffee are plenty—and the I.Q. of both tribes is said to be high, as is the case of the Banyakyusa (plural of Nyakyusa).

Maybe you might therefore expect to find a corresponding standard of dwelling-houses, perhaps even the same type of hut. But in this matter you will be highly surprised; so great are the differences between the three areas. Apart from the original design of the house being round and the roof thatched, no similarity exists between the various houses or their interior lay-outs.

The round, thatched Chagga hut has its roof all way down to the ground. It is not very large and the interior lay-out is quite primitive. A cow or goat lives all its life indoors and is fed there. A short and uncomfortable bed is found near by. Down the centre of the floor is a stone-paved aisle. Everything looks quite simple—especially when you remember that in other aspects the Chagga are quite advanced in their use of modern facilities; for instance they use electricity for the grinding of their maize.

The Haya hut—the old, round type—is a really magnificent thing. I think its centre is seven or eight metres high. In front it has a kind of overhang, maybe you might call it a front room, where people will sit, and where guests will be received. If you are a wellcome guest, a straw mat will be rolled out to cover the grass flooring of the hut. The walls of the front room are solid plates made from a kind of reed. The hearth is placed near the centre of the inner room.

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Some Field Notes on the Nyakyusa

(Tukuyu District, Tanganyika Territory)

By F. Rudolf Lehmann

The following field notes on the Nyakyusa (Wanyakyusa, Wanyakjussa) represent only a small part of what I wrote down during my residence of about three months among this people in the summer of 1939. The present selected notes refer only to my sojourn in the village of Katumba near Masoko, with an ethnic group of the Nyakyusa who call themselves „Wa-Masoko"[1]. Notwithstanding the short time I had

[1] Cf. R. Thurnwald, p. 65; G. Wilson, Land Rights, p. 35.

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

343 Also the stables I saw were very clean; their length is adjusted to the number of cattle which are sheltered therein. Sometimes a wooden hoop is to be found in such a stable, hanging down from the ceiling. [251] The inside of the hoop is filled with a wicker-work whose meshes are dense enough to hold fruits to be dried. If such a hoop is hanging in the stable being out of use, a bag made of leaves containing pumpkin seeds *(inyugu)* for later planting may be fastened to it, and on the beams of 233 the framework of the walls you may find a plaited leather neckband *(ulukoba)* for cows destined to hold a cow's bell *(ibangala)*. The sound of the bells of the cattle gave already great delight to the first European visitors of Nyakyusa and Ngonde Land, as we can read with Fotheringham (p. 24): "It is a pretty sight to see the herd coming into villages in the evening, and pleasant to hear the tinkle of the bells which are suspended from their necks, recalling in homely quietude the peaceful scenes of the Swiss."

184 The daily life of the Nyakyusa differs more or less among the ● 101 different ethnic groups which in former times had been independent units. Nowadays, however, all those groups who have similar speech and customs and share, therefore, a progressing common culture, only distinguished by minor local pecularities, are called by the common name "Nyakyusa" (Cf. G. Wilson: An Introduction to Nyakyusa Society. Bantu Studies, Vol. X, 1936, p. 254 f).

Synopsis

080 Verfasser beschreibt in diesem zweiten Bericht die verschiedenen Arbeiten aus dem Alltagsleben der Nyakyusa. Die Betreuung der großen Rinderherden, einschließlich des Melkens, ist Männersache, die Frauen reinigen nur die Ställe. Die Männer behacken die Felder, die Frauen säen, reinigen, ernten und bereiten alle Nahrung zu. Diese Arbeitsteilung fand Verfasser 1939 noch unangetastet, dagegen waren die zahlreichen mit Saat und Ernte verbundenen Zeremonien durch den europäischen Einfluß fast verschwunden. Ebenso war der Verfall der traditionellen Künste und Handwerke weit fortgeschritten durch europäische Einwirkungen wie durch die überall verstreuten indischen Händler als Vermittler der ausländischen Waren. Diese hatten auch die traditionelle Kleidung abgewandelt (als die Europäer kamen, gingen die Eingeborenen noch überwiegend nackt). Die alten geometrischen Muster, die äußere Hüttenwände und Türen schmückten, waren zum Teil mit Zeichnungen von Fahrrädern, Autos, Flugzeugen u. a. durchsetzt. Während früher auch das Alltagsleben der Nyakyusa in deren verschiedenen ethnischen Gruppen deutliche Unterschiede aufwies, sind diese ehemals unabhängigen Einheiten unter den europäischen Einwirkungen mehr und mehr kulturell zusammengewachsen.

11:Thwaites C-5 (ca. 1942) 1944
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

[P.236A]

WANYAKYUSA AGRICULTURE

By D. H. Thwaites, Agricultural Assistant, Tanganyika Territory

131 The Wanyakyusa occupy the District of Rungwe in the Southern Highlands Province. The district lies between 9° and 9½° S. latitude at the northern tip of Lake Nyasa. The altitude
133 ranges from 1,500 feet to 9,500 feet. The
631 district is divided into twelve chiefdoms. The Administrative Headquarters are at Tukuyu, which was known before the British occupation as Neu Langenberg.

Inhabitants

101 The local people are not indigeneous to this area. They came, tradition has it, from
[173] Mahenge via Ukinga after many tribal fights. They are akin to the Wahenga in Nyasaland bordering on the Tanganyika boundary. It is
191 estimated that only 10 per cent of the Wanya-
161 kyusa speak Kiswahili. According to the 1935 census the total poulation was 153,204. The
162 total number of tax-payers in 1942 was 35,304, or 23.04 per cent of the total population.

181 The people themselves are extremely industrious and intelligent. As there are 90 people to the square mile, living conditions are
105 crowded and emigration is continually taking place. The people are partial to litigation over cattle and women. The number of cases heard annually in the Native Courts is about 6,000. There is no one historical and traditional head of the tribe. The twelve Chiefs are, in reality, hereditary Headmen who have been selected by Government to be Chiefs. They are in effect only *primi inter pares* in native eyes, the outlook of the people being unusually democratic for a native tribe.

105 The people live in houses made of wattle and daub or bambco frame, with thatched
342 roof, and villages are sited mostly along ridges.
361 Rectangular houses are now built instead of the round huts of former days. They often stand in rows with a main street down the middle with bananas in the background. The more progressive natives build with sun-dried or burnt brick. Stock are stalled in the same house owing to the prevalence of thieving, but sleep in separate rooms.

Climate

132 The rainfall of the district varies in the different areas. In Tukuyu itself the annual average for 25 years (1918-1942) is 100.22 inches. On the Lake shore the average is probably higher, but no continuous statistics are available. The heaviest rainfall months are from December to May, but, in most years,